

Communication Tips

- **Interact within your child's competency level.** Do short, simple, everyday activities together. Make it fun.
- **Zone of Connection:** Get at eye-level with your child, arm's length or closer, with as much contact as possible.
- **Don't wear out his name.** Try other attention-getters, such as "ahem" or a cough. Say his name once, and then touch his shoulder.
- **Increase non-verbal communication.** Try losing your voice for a period and only communicate non-verbally for fun. **Increase facial expressions and hand gestures.** Make your face so interesting your child will have a reason to look at you and pay attention.
- **Use fewer words, and slow down.** And match the length of your utterances to your child's ability.
- **Make your words important** by spotlighting key words with volume, pacing, pitch, an accent, expressiveness, and other emphasis.

Imperative Communication

Imperatives put pressure on your child to communicate; they tell your child what to do, or compel him to make a choice, or give the correct answer. Sometimes, you can't avoid it, but a goal is to reduce it to 20% of your communication.

Examples: How old are you? What color is this? Say "thank you." Which game do you want to play? Put on your shoes.

Declarative Communication

Declaratives allow you to share something you feel or want without requiring a verbal response from your child. This approach models the natural way children tend to talk, and will increase your child's desire to comply and communicate with you. Use declaratives to compliment, commiserate, flirt, wonder, comment, and share emotions.

Declarative Examples:

- **Share an experience or emotion:** "I am so hungry." "I'm not having fun." "Whoa! Look at that!" "I wonder when it's going to snow?"
- **Invite your child to do something with you:** "Let's walk to the playground." "Here are bubbles."
- **Celebrate and team with your child:** "Way to go!" "High five!" "We did it!"
- **Encourage or suggest:** "We can do it." "Why don't we take a break?"
- **Reflect on a past experience** (try using a photo album): "That was fun." "That was my favorite ride"
- **Narrate the action (instead of imperatives):** "We are putting on our shoes." "We are walking together. We are going fast!"